

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 3892

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, IS, JO, LE
SUBJECT: JORDANIAN/ISRAELI BRIDGE ARRANGEMENTS AS RELATIVE TO
LEBANESE/ISRAELI "GOOD FENCE" SITUATION

REF: BEIRUT 2360

1. THIS MESSAGE IS IN RESPONSE TO EMBASSY BEIRUT'S REQUEST
IN PARA. 9 REFTEL FOR INFORMATION REGARDING JORDANIAN/ISRAELI
BORDER/BRIDGE CROSSING PROCEDURES AS BACKGROUND FOR CURRENT
INVESTIGATION OF POSSIBLE ISRAELI/LEBANESE ARRANGEMENTS ON THEIR
BORDER. EMBASSY TEL AVIV AND CONGEN JERUSALEM WILL ALSO UNDOUBTEDLY
WISH TO COMMENT ON THIS SUBJECT.

2. THE JURICIAL BASIS FOR GOJ/GOI MEETINGS REGARDING THE
BRIDGES WE UNDERSTAND DERIVES FROM THE POST-1948 UNDERSTANDINGS
AT RHODES WHICH SET UP THE MIXED ARMISTICE COMMISSION (MAC) FOR
DEALING WITH ARMISTICE LINE ISSUES. THERE IS A JORDANIAN MILITARY
OFFICER WHO MEETS WITH AN ISRAELI COUNTERPART SEVERAL TIMES
A YEAR. MEETINGS DEAL WITH ROUTINE, LOW-LEVEL MATTERS CONFINED
TO OCCASIONAL BORDER ISSUES AND MAINLY TO OPERATION AND PROCEDURES
FOR BRIDGE CROSSING: ARRANGEMENTS FOR ARRANGING ACCESS FOR
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REPAIR OF THE BRIDGES; FOR COORDINATING HOURS WHEN BRIDGE IS OPEN;
AND FOR REGULATING FLOW OF PERSONS ACROSS BRIDGE. (GOJ OFTEN
COMPLAINS THAT RIGOROUS ISRAELI SECURITY INSPECTION PROCEDURES
CAUSE GOI TO RESTRICT NUMBERS OF JORDANIANS WHO CAN CROSS ON
ANY GIVEN DAY. THIS CAUSES SOME HARDSHIP DURING PERIOD OF HEAVY
TRAFFIC DURING SUMMER THEN THOUSANDS WISH TO CROSS ON SOME DAYS.)

3. JORDANIANS HAVE COME OVER THE YEARS TO ACCEPT ISRAELI/JORDANIAN MAC MEETINGS, AND THEY ARE NOT POLITICALLY CONTROVERSIAL IN ANY WAY. WE PRESUME POST-1948 LEBANESE/ISRAELI ARMISTICE AGREEMENT PROVIDES SIMILAR BASIS FOR GOI/GOL MEETINGS REGARDING BORDER. WE SUSPECT HOWEVER BRIDGES ARE A SIMPLER PRACTICAL MATTER TO REGULATE THAN GOOD FENCE: THERE ARE ONLY TWO BRIDGES (KING HUSSEIN OR ALLENBY BRIDGE AND PRINCE MUHAMMAD OR DAMIYA BRIDGE) AND UNLIKE WSRAELI/LEBANESE BORDER AREA, JORDAN RIVER FORMS A NATURAL BARRIER, WHICH, AUGUMENTED BY LAND MINES AND PATROLS ON BOTH SIDES DOES NOT PRESENT AN ACCESS PROBLEM TO EITHER SIDE IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN IT AS BARRIER.

4. ACCORDING TO OUR UNDERSTANDING, CURRENT GOI/GOJ BRIDGE CROSSING ARRANGEMENTS DERIVE ESSENTIALLY FROM "OPEN BRIDGES" PROCEDURES DEVELOPED IMMEDIATELY AFTER 1967 WAR (FOR WHICH DAYAN WAS PRINCIPAL ISRAELI ARCHITECT). THEIR BASIC INTENT WAS TO ALLOW SOME REUNITING AND VISITATION OF WEST BANK AND GAZA FAMILIES SEPARATED AS A RESULT OF STATE OF OCCUPATION OF JORDAN'S WEST BANK. GOJ THEREFORE HAS KEY PLOITICAL INTEREST IN KEEPING BRIDGES OPEN: AS A DEMONSTRATION OF ARAB SUPPORT FOR WEST BANK/GAZA POPULATIONS UNDER ISRAELI OCCUPATIOION AND AS A MEANS OF MAINTAINING CONTACT ON BOTH INDIVIDUAL AND POLITICAL LEVEL WITH ARAB POPULATION THERE, MOST OF WHOM HAVE RELATIVES IN JORDAN. ECONOMICALLY, JORDAN SENDS VERY FEW EXPORTS TO WEST BANK AND TRADE BALANCE

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IS HEAVILY IN FAVOR OF WEST BANK/GAZA (MAINLY AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS TO AND THROUGH JORDAN TO REST OF ARAB WORLD).

5. THERE ARE CURRENTLY TWO ASPECTS OF MOVEMENT OF PERSONS ACROSS BRIDGE: (A) ARABS AND (B) NON-ARAB FOREIGNERS.

(A) ARABS: TO BE ELIGIBLE TO GO TO WEST BANK/GAZA, AN ARAB MUST BE A RELATIVE OF A CURRENT RESIDENT OF WEST BANK AND GAZA AND THEIR RELATIVE MUST APPLY TO GOI MILITARY GOVERNOR ON WEST BANK FOR PERMISSION. MOST VISITORS ARE RESTRICTED TO VISITS IN SUMMER, OR TO RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS, AND VISITS ARE FOR A MAXIMUM OF, WE BELIEVE, TWO MONTHS. (ALTHOUGH, ONCE IN WEST BANK, WE KNOW MANY VISITORS ALSO VISIT ARAB RELATIVES WHO ARE ISRAELI ARABS. WE ARE NOT CERTAIN THAT AN ISRAELI ARAB HAS THE SAME ABILITY AS A WEST BANK ARAB TO OBTAIN GOI PERMISSION FOR A RELATIVE TO VISIT HIM. TEL AVIV MAY WISH TO COMMENT ON THIS ASPECT.) THE FAMILY VISITATION PROCEDURE WOULD THEREFORE HAVE ONLY

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LIMITED RELEVANCE TO LEBANESE/ISRAELI SITUATION, IF "GOOD FENCE" ENVISAGES PASSAGE ESSENTIALLY OF LEBANESE CITIZENS TO AND FROM ISRAEL, SINCE IN EFFECT NON-PALESTINIANS ARE NOT PERMITTED BY GOI TO VISIT WEST BANK. FURTHERMORE, GOI DOES NOT PERMIT JORDANIAN OFFICIALS TO VISIT WEST BANK, EVEN IF THEY HAVE FAMILY TIES THERE. ISSUE OF WHETHER PALESTINIAN RESIDENTS OF LEBANON COULD BE ALLOWED TO USE GOOD FENCE TO VISIT FAMILIES IN WEST BANK/GAZA OR ISRAEL WE LEVE TO BEIRUT AND TEL AVIV. WE PRESUME GOI WOULD BE CONCERNED OVER SECURITY PROBLEMS AND THAT THIS ISSUE WOULD ALSO HAVE CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS IN PLO-LEBANESE CONTEXT. (B) NON-ARABS: THIS IMPORTANT ASPECT CONSISTS OF PASSAGE OF THOUSANDS OTLOWINLY U.S. AND EUROPEAN CITIZENS, CHIEFLY TOURISTS, ACROSS BRIDGES EVERY YEAR. AS WAS THE CASE PRIOR TO 1967 WAR, JORDAN IS ONLY ARAB COUNTRY THAT PERMITS THIS PASSAGE TO AND FROM ISRAEL, ALTHOUGH IT NOW MOVES VIA WEST BANK OCCUPIED ARE BRATHER THAN THROUGH MANDELBAUM GATE. ONE MAJOR JORDANIAN OBJECTIVE IN OPEINING BRIDGES TO TOURISTS IS ENCOURAGEMENT OF TOURISM IN EAST BANK OF JORDAN, SINCE MANY TOURISTS, INCLUDING LARGE CHARTER GROUPS, TRANSIT JORDAN AND ITS SITES ENROUTE TO JERUSALEM AND WEST BANK. WITHOUT ACCESS TO JERUSALEM, ETC.,
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THESE GROUPS WOULD NOT COME TO JORDAN AT ALL, SO IT IS IN JORDAN'S ECONOMIC INTEREST TO KEEP BRIDGE OPEN FOR THIS FOREIGN TRAVEL. IN FACT, NON-ARAB TOURISTS ARE OBLIGED TO SPEND 48 HOURS IN JORDAN PRIOR TO CROSSING TO WEST BANK AND

ARABS ARE OBLIGED TO REMAIN IN JORDAN SEVERAL DAYS IN ORDER TO OBTAIN A TEMPORARY JORDANIAN PASSPORT VALID FOR ISRAEL ONLY (BECAUSE GOI AUTHORITIES PLACE ISRAELI STAMPS IN THE TRAVEL DOCUMENT).

6. WITH REFERENCE TO LEBANESE SITUATION, WE WONDER IF ONE ASPECT OF GOOD FENCE COULD BE PROVISION FOR TRANSIT OF NON-ARAB TOURIST TRAFFIC TO ISRAEL IN ROUGHLY THE SAME WAY JORDAN CURRENTLY PERMITS IT TO WEST BANK (AND AS IT DID THROUGH THE MANDELBAUM GATE EVEN BEFORE 1967 WAR). WE UNDERSTAND THERE WAS MUCH FREER FLOW OF PERSONS (PROBABLY NON-ARABS) BETWEEN ISRAEL AND LEBANON IN 1950S, FOR INSTANCE, THAN AHS BEEN THE CASE RECENTLY. IT OCCURS TO US THAT PERHAPS AN ARRANGEMENT FOR PASSAGE OF TOURISTS (NON-ARAB AND WE PRESUME NON-ISRAELI) WOULD HAVE SOME APPEAL TO THE LEBANESE IN TERMS OF ENCOURAGING TOURISM AND THEREFORE HELPING IN BUILDING LEBANESE ECONOMY; THESE BENEFITS PERHAPS COULD AT LEAST SUGARCOAT SOME OF THE MORE UNPALATABLE ASPECT TO THE LEBANESE OF KEEPING THE GOOD FENCE OPEN.

8. WE HOPE ABOVE IS RESPONSIVE TO EMBASSY BEIRUT'S REQUEST. APPRECIATE ANY INFORAMTION OR COMMENTS FROM EMBASSY BEIRUT, TEL AVIV AND CONGEN JERUSALEM.
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